

Ezra 10:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they gave their hands that they would put away their wives; and being guilty, they offered a ram of the flock for their trespass.

Analysis

And they gave their hands (vayittenu yadam)—this idiom signifies making a binding oath or covenant commitment (2 Kings 10:15, Ezekiel 17:18). The gesture symbolized pledged faithfulness, making their commitment public and irrevocable.

That they would put away their wives (lehotsi nasheihem)—the verb yatsa (to send out/away) is the technical term for divorce. The willingness to dissolve these marriages, though painful, demonstrated prioritizing covenant with Yahweh over human relationships. This wasn't casual divorce but covenant purification.

And being guilty, they offered a ram of the flock for their trespass (va'ashemim eil-tson al-ashamatam)—the guilt offering (asham) prescribed in Leviticus 5:14-6:7 for violations requiring restitution. The specific mention of 'a ram' follows Levitical requirements. This demonstrates that repentance required both practical action (divorcing) and ritual atonement (sacrifice). The combination teaches that genuine repentance addresses sin comprehensively—both practical consequences and spiritual guilt.

Historical Context

The guilt offering (asham) was specifically required for violations involving sacred things and deliberate trespass (Leviticus 5-6). By offering rams, these priests acknowledged their sin as serious covenant violation requiring blood atonement.

The public hand-giving ceremony follows ancient Near Eastern treaty-making conventions where physical gestures sealed verbal oaths. Archaeological evidence from Mesopotamia shows similar hand-clasping rituals in legal proceedings.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. What does the public hand-giving oath teach about the importance of accountability and witnesses in repentance?
2. How does the guilt offering demonstrate that repentance requires both practical action and spiritual atonement?
3. What principles for addressing sin emerge from the combination of immediate action (oath) and ongoing process (divorce and sacrifice)?

Interlinear Text

וַתֵּן יָדָם	וְהָיוּ יָדָם	לְהוֹצִיא	נָשֵׁיהֶם	וְהָיוּ יָדָם
And they gave	their hands	that they would put away	their wives	and being guilty
H5414	H3027	H3318	H802	H818
אֵיל	צֶאֱנָן	עַל	אֲשַׁמְתָּם:	
they offered a ram	of the flock	H5921	for their trespass	
H352	H6629		H819	

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 6:6 (Parallel theme): And he shall bring his trespass offering unto the LORD, a ram without blemish out of the flock, with thy estimation, for a trespass offering, unto the priest:

2 Kings 10:15 (Parallel theme): And when he was departed thence, he lighted on Jehonadab the son of Rechab coming to meet him: and he saluted him, and said to him, Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? And Jehonadab answered, It is. If it be, give me thine hand. And he gave him his hand; and he took him up to him into the chariot.

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